

Jazz NHP boundaries exclude the lagoon that is maintained by the city.

In addition to rehabilitation of the structures, several visibility issues were addressed by the design teams. The Jazz Complex is not highly visible from outside Armstrong Park. Visual connections between the park and its access routes as well as visual connections within the park need improvement.

Recent negotiations with the city produced an opportunity to relocate radio station WWOZ from its cramped broadcast facility in the Caretakers House. WWOZ, a non-profit station operating under the auspices of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation, provides the potential for an exciting partnership with the park. Visitors to the historical park will be able to observe and participate in live radio broadcasts. The partnership would enable the station to consolidate its broadcast facilities and offices into one building. The Preferred Alternative Plan provides for the new building to be built near the fire station in a location that will not impede visibility from the firehouse to the rest of the Complex. WWOZ would raise the money to build the structure and would have a separate lease with the city.

Standards for the maintenance of the lagoons to protect public health and safety will be

written into the operations agreement with the city. Access hours and open hours of both Armstrong Park and the Jazz Complex will be included in the agreements. Appropriate surveys will be done to identify any underground tanks and potential hazardous materials within the buildings (asbestos and lead paint).

No date has been set for completion of the facilities, but cooperative efforts from many divisions within the NPS Southeast Regional Office, the city of New Orleans, and park staff are moving that date closer. The design charrette provided the park with valuable information on which to base future development. It also created an important partnership between Tulane University and New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park.

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For further information about the historical park and its development contact:  
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Carol S. Ash

## Rehabilitating MLK's Neighborhood

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**O**n October 10, 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed legislation creating Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site to commemorate and memorialize Dr. King. President Carter stated,

It's my hope that by preserving the physical environment in which Dr. King developed his concept of social justice, our people will come to understand more fully what we have accomplished and what remains to be done. May it be a perpetual reminder of Dr. King's great work and inspire people everywhere to strive for the realization of his dream of equal rights and equal opportunity for all.

For 20 years, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site has partnered with private and governmental agencies to protect and interpret the places where Martin Luther King, Jr. was born, where he lived, worked, and worshiped, and where he is buried. The historic site functions within a living, breathing community that reflects Dr. King's continuing influence today. The historic site preserves the past as it moves toward the future.

The past and the future converged on October 18, 2000, at the Founder's Day Ceremony celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the historic site. The National Park Service recognized the contributions of four individuals to the

Former President Jimmy Carter spoke at the Founder's Day ceremony celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site. NPS photo.



development and growth of the site: former President Jimmy Carter, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, U.S. Representative John Lewis, and Mrs. Christine King Farris, Dr. King's sister.

During the ceremony, Carter said,

I am proud to have played a small role in the establishment of the Sweet Auburn district as a national historic site. Today, the district and the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site stand as monuments to Dr. King, who embodied so much of the tragedy and triumph of the Civil Rights Movement.

The National Park Service began preservation activities on Auburn Avenue in the 1980s. Atlanta's Sweet Auburn community that nurtured young Martin Luther King had two distinct sections. Single family homes, apartment buildings, duplex shotgun homes, and small businesses comprised the residential eastern end of the avenue. The business, social, educational, and spiritual institutions were located at the avenue's western end. The boundaries of the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site and Preservation District still reflect that division today. Park historians surveyed and documented the condition of all the structures and land parcels within the combined site boundaries.

National Park Service preservation activities have been concentrated within the historic site or residential end of the avenue. Eighteen homes plus Fire Station No. 6 have been rehabilitated to reflect the 1930s, the time period that Dr. King lived at 501 Auburn Avenue. President Carter's hope of preserving the physical environment that nurtured young Martin Luther King has become a major focus of the park's mission.

Each property is a physical record of its time, place, and use through history and is a sep-

arate preservation project with its own special challenges. Some buildings had extensive water damage because of leaky roofs while other buildings had fire damage. Structures that had been vacant for extended time periods suffered vandalism and water damage from leaky pipes, broken windows, and roof and wall holes that were never repaired.

Shotgun houses located near the corner of Boulevard and Auburn Avenue were the first National Park Service projects in the newly established park. Rehabilitating these homes presented unique challenges. To maintain the historic integrity of the buildings, staff members salvaged plaster, retained original features such as windows and fireplace mantels whenever possible, reconstructed missing historic features, and saved historic fabric for re-use. Paint analysis revealed a wide palette of colors for repainting the homes.

Unexpected situations occurred on a weekly basis during the rehabilitation work of the 1980s. On one occasion, park staff members discovered a body under a building. Gunshots from a location on Old Wheat Street came through the back wall of 476 Auburn Avenue on another occasion. One resident in a nearby home started each day by selling liquor by the shot at 8:00 am. Buyers would line up outside the door.

Daily morning rituals included chasing vagrants out from under the houses and checking for break-ins. There was even a daily "poop patrol." Security systems were installed in several structures to prevent the theft of tools and building materials. Besides the construction work, a busy prostitution and drug trade flourished on the Boulevard-Auburn Avenue corner in the 1980s.

Rehabilitation continued throughout the late 1980s and into the 1990s. Additional homes on Auburn Avenue as well as structures on Edgewood Avenue were converted into residential units or park offices. The preservation work included saving and replacing landscape features such as stone walls, brick sidewalks, and fences. Partners that have assisted in the preservation efforts include the Trust for Public Land and the Historic District Development Corporation.

Rebuilding the homes was just the first step in revitalizing the neighborhood. Over the past 20 years the National Park Service has become the primary landlord within the historic site. Returning residents to the community has been a park goal. The law that created this site specified

that people living in the homes when the National Park Service acquired the property would be permitted to stay in their homes, at the same rent, after the rehabilitation of the structures. The rest of the homes are rented at a commercial rate, one of the lowest rates in the area. Original residents still live in four of the units.

The park rents 40 residential living units. These units range from apartments, duplex shotgun homes, and single family dwellings. Three units are reserved for seasonal National Park Service employees. There is a 95% occupancy rate and a waiting list of persons interested in living in Dr. King's neighborhood.

Mrs. Frankie Ross is one of several residents who lived in other areas of the community before moving into one of the park-owned homes. She recalls going to the Royal Peacock Club in the 1940s, "The women would go to the club in their best gowns and the men always wore suits and ties. We would dance and we always had a good time on Auburn Avenue." A resident of the Birth Home block for 10 years, she has witnessed the tremendous growth of Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site.

The growth is continuing. Four living units are in various stages of rehabilitation. The exteriors of 515 and 518 Auburn Avenue were rehabilitated before the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. Fire Station No. 6, closed as an operating station in 1991, re-opened in June 1996 after extensive rehabilitation. The historic structure now contains a restored 1927 American La France fire engine, watch desk, telegraph machine, fire alarm bell, exhibits, and a bookstore.

*National Park Service staff painted Dr. King's birth home in 1988. NPS photo.*



The National Park Service recently acquired the Victorian homes on each side of Dr. King's Birth Home and stabilized both homes by replacing the roofs. The next phase of exterior work includes replacement of damaged historic fabric and painting. Modern materials and techniques are used in the interior rehabilitation work of the structures. Residents enjoy air conditioning, modern appliances, and contemporary fixtures.

In her remarks at the Founder's Day ceremony, Coretta Scott King spoke of the future,

*As we celebrate this joyful anniversary today, I look forward to the future of this historic site with the faith that it will continue to serve Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, legacy in new and creative ways as the years unfold.*

The future holds new preservation challenges. The National Park Service received a "Save America's Treasures" grant to begin important structural work on Ebenezer Baptist Church, Dr. King's lifetime spiritual home. The park continues to maintain Dr. King's Birth Home and has instituted steps to improve its condition.

Visitors come to Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site to experience the physical environment that influenced Dr. King. For 20 years, the National Park Service has committed time, money, human resources, and passion to protecting and interpreting that environment. Through these combined efforts, the National Park Service hopes to inspire and educate present and future generations to "strive for the realization of Dr. King's dream of equal rights and equal opportunity for all."

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